

THE

HISTORIAN

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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

April 1998

APRIL HAPPENINGS

The April meeting of the Hancock County Historical Society will be held at noon on Thursday, April 16 at the Kate Lobrano House, 108 Cue Street, Bay Saint Louis.

Representatives from the Hancock County Library System will present the program outlining the progress in resources and equipment now available for research and pleasure reading. They will also acquaint us with the new Kiln Public Library which will be accessible to many of our members in the county.

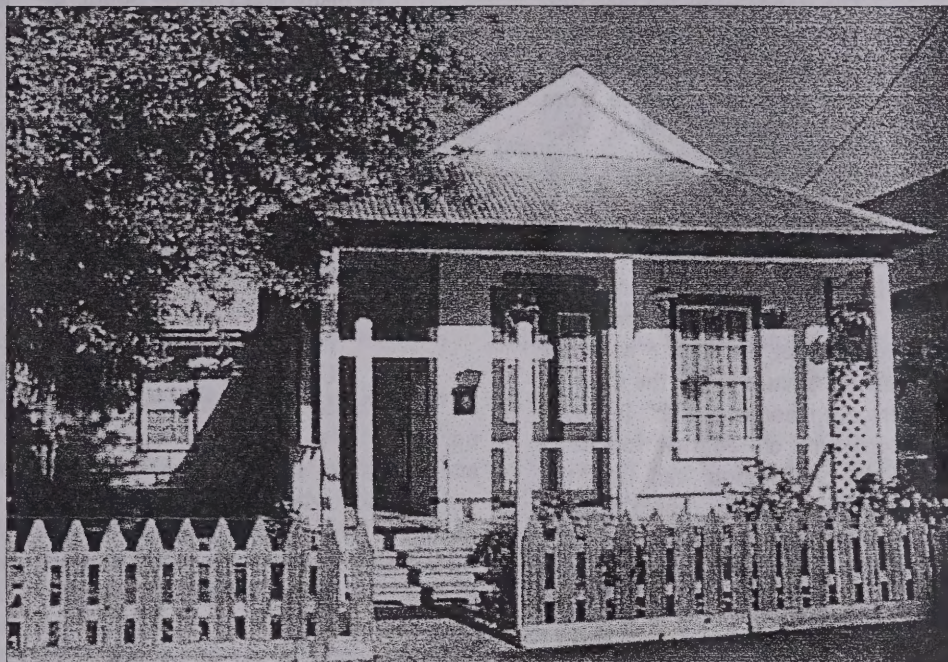
Call 467-4090 for luncheon reservations at \$6.00. Please call early to assure your reservation and to help us plan seating.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

If you have not seen the Lobrano House recently, treat yourself to a moment of pride and stop by for a visit. Using the Pilgrimage as an incentive to get things done quickly, we called on Sheriff Ronnie Peterson for help in the form of prison labor. As always, he responded immediately and affirmatively. He told us to set the day and hour and the labor would be there - we did; they were. The prisoners did an excellent job for which we are very appreciative.

Bill Flores (Karen's husband) supervised the operation and did the detail work himself. He treated the galvanized roof for rust and painted it with aluminum roofing paint. It looks great.

See President, page 3



THE KATE LOBRANO HOUSE, WITH NEW PAINT AND FLOWERS

MISSISSIPPI WAS FIRST TO GRANT WOMEN PROPERTY RIGHTS

Women's legal position in the United States was complicated by lack of uniformity of laws among the many states. In general, U.S. law followed English common law under which a woman, together with children and the mentally unsound, was a legally incompetent person.

It was not until 1870 that married British women acquired property rights. In this country, the law generally followed the British example.

It was Mississippi that led the way for American women to obtain equal property rights long before 1870.

In 1837 a state court heard the case involving the question of the right acquired by the husband of a Chicasaw Indian woman to property she owned at the time of her marriage. It was held that as the marriage had taken place before the 1830 act of the legislature, which abolished the tribal customs of the Indians, the rights of the parties were fixed by tribal customs. Under these, the husband acquired no right to the property of the wife which she owned at the time of the marriage, of the subsequent acquisitions, and that no part was subject to the debts of the husband. One historian called this ruling "an advance of the laws of civilization, which perpetuated the patriarchal relations."

Two years later, on February 15,

1839, the legislature passed an "Act for the protection and preservation of the rights of married women," credit for which has traditionally been given to Mrs. T.B.J. Hadley, wife of a prominent state officer of an earlier period. Another explanation credits a prominent member of the legislature, heavily in debt and anxious to marry a wealthy lady without involving her in his financial ruin.

The statute provided that "any married woman might become possessed of property in her own name and as her own property and free from liability for her husband's debt, provided the same should not come from her husband after marriage."

An act of February 8, 1846 secured for married women the profits of her lands and the production of her slaves. Later the supreme court ruled that the terms of the statute were not adequate to "secure to her the fruits of her personal labor and skill." In 1871, the legislature closed that loophole. The 1869 constitution, and later the 1890 constitution, ruled "that the legislature shall never create by law any distinction between the rights of men and women to acquire, own and enjoy property of all kinds."

The 1839 act was the first on the subject of women's property rights passed by any state of the union that adhered, like Mississippi, to the ancient common law methods. Maine took a similar step forward two years later.

The independent right of married women to make contracts was recognized first, in a limited way, by an act of the legislature in 1846 dealing with the ownership and management of slaves. The act of 1857 further recognized this right of individuality in the woman, and validated her contracts for "family supplies and necessities, education of her children, carriages and horses, buildings on her land and materials therefor, or for work and labor done for the use of her separate property." In 1871, and more completely by the act of 1880, she was put on the same footing as a single woman or a man in the making of contracts of any kind.

The constitution of 1900 provides: "The legislature shall never create by law any distinction between the rights of men and women to acquire, own, enjoy and dispose of property of all kinds, or their power to contract... Married women are hereby fully emancipated from all disability on account of coverture."

In 1920, American women were granted the right to vote under the 19th Amendment to the Constitution.

In many areas of the South, including Mississippi, voting rights were denied to Blacks until the 1960s.

[Sources: Dunbar Roland, *Encyclopedia of Mississippi History*, 1907; *The American Peoples Encyclopedia*, 1968]

A SAMPLE OF THE TALES OF THE LATE S. G. THIGPEN OF PICAYUNE

SUPERSTITIONS

Out in the country where I grew up there were widespread superstitions among certain people about owls. I knew one old lady who just knew that someone would die when she heard a screech owl. She would cower in fear for herself if she heard one nearby and just know that she was going to die real soon. When she would hear of a death in the general neighborhood later on, even a year or two later, she would be relieved and say, "I just knew someone was going to die."

Many people today believe that the hoot of the hoot owl brings bad luck. An old Roman author called the owl "the funeral bird of the night." It is an old superstition that if an owl lights on a house someone in that house will soon die.

A rooster crowing in the middle of the night is thought by some to be an omen of some misfortune for the family of that home. I used to hear it said that when a man was going to die his dog would sense the coming of death ahead and would sit up and howl. I remember when I was a child I heard older people tell of a man's dog howling for several hours before his death. I heard this explanation - the dog had missed his master and was howling in his loneliness for him.

Back when I went to school, to a small country school, some of the children would wear small sacks of asafetida around their necks. I never did know just what disease it was supposed to protect against, but it would have taken strong germs to have withstood the smell of asafetida. I once sat near a little girl who wore one of these balls and I'll never forget how nauseating the thing smelled. I lost sight of this girl and did not see her again for many years until she was a grown young lady. When I saw her again she had become a most beautiful woman. My first thought was to wonder if the asafetida had anything to do with making her so good looking.

THE TELEPHONE

A small circus, or show, came to our small community - Lake Como - of two small stores, a church, post-office, school and numerous farm homes. The big posters announcing the coming of the show had been put on every barn in the whole area sometime before.

There was a good crowd on hand for the show - everyone living for miles around must have been there. The show arrived in four or five wagons pulled by mules. There was a huge tent (I am sure it would not look so large now.) with a few animal acts, a clown, a trained horse and two trapeze artists. One of these was a woman dressed in tights to the horror of the good ladies of the community. They even claimed that some of the men slipped around to the back of the show to see her put on a special performance. This was a special subject for conversation where women met for many months thereafter.

The circus people had with them a telephone. They had the phone placed on an empty barrel with wires run about one fourth of a mile to a store. For ten cents you could ring the phone and talk to the merchant in the store. This new fangled gadget attracted much attention. The circus man told in exciting words about this new wonder which you yourself, could experience for only ten cents, just one thin dime. He told of the never-to-be forgotten experience and thrill of talking over the phone. He said something like this: "For only a dime you can talk over this wonder-

ful thrill of talking over the phone. He said something like this: "For only a dime you can talk over this wonderful, this fantastic, this out-of-the-world new invention and have an experience that you can in the years to come tell your grandchildren about." Many of the people paid their dimes and talked over the phone.

A long, tall, old man heard the showman tell how you could talk to the merchant over one fourth mile away just as if he were in your presence. He paid his dime and heard the merchant's voice. He asked the merchant where he was and other questions. After getting through with the phone conversation he was not satisfied; he demanded that the showman let him look under the barrel- he thought he was being tricked and that the merchant was hidden under the barrel. Not finding the merchant under there he still was not satisfied but took off in long strides to the store to be sure there was no trick. (From S.G. Thigpen, *A Boy in Rural Mississippi and Other Stories*, Copyright by S.G. Thigpen, 1966.)

Call now for your luncheon reservation.
Bring a friend.

NEW MEMBERS

Michael Battalora, Durham, N. C.
Wendy Battalora, Durham, N.C.
Sandra Robert, New Orleans
Ronald Robert, Jr., New Orleans
Alexander Molnar, Jr., Diamondhead
Ann Edelson, Bay Saint Louis
Bert Edelson, Bay Saint Louis
Virginia Wagner, Bay Saint Louis
Fred Wagner, Bay Saint Louis
Mrs. Gene Daymude, New Orleans
Gene Daymude, New Orleans
Judy Wolfe, Bay Saint Louis
Bernard Wolfe, Bay Saint Louis
Terry Latham, Diamondhead
Mrs. Clifford Hernandez, Waveland
Clifford Hernandez, Waveland
Mary Ann Brockhaus, New Orleans
John Brockhaus III, New Orleans
Wanda Haas, Waveland
Nicholas Haas, Waveland

President, from page 1

Paint for the house and trim was provided free from the Diamondhead Ace Hardware and Dr. and Mrs. Ron Graham donated the porch and deck paint.

Ray and June Murphy planted the "annuals" flower bed with an assortment of colorful coleus and petunias and they planted the perennial plant bed with azelias, crotons and others whose names I do not know. Both the labor and the plants were gifts from the Murphys to the Society and contribute greatly to the pleasure of working or visiting at Lobrano House.

Karen had planted the front bed with petunias a few days earlier so the combination of flowers in various colors have greatly brightened our entrance. She also made nine hanging baskets for the gallery which are loved by neighborhood wrens who now have a family in two. We tiptoe off and on the gallery so we will not disturb them.

So, our Spring renovation can be attributed to the work and donations of Sheriff Ronnie Peterson, unidentified prisoners, Bill Flores, Diamondhead Ace Hardware, Mr. and Mrs. Ray Murphy and Dr. and Mrs. Ron Graham. Thank you, generous members of the Society.

Mr. William Ruhr visited the Society recently and brought us a hand-written deed to the "Independent Hope Hook and Ladder Company, No. One of the City of Shieldsboro, domiciled in the City of Bay St. Louis" dated June 27, 1890. It would appear that the name of the city was still in limbo fifteen years after it was officially changed to Bay Saint Louis in 1875.

Mr. and Mrs. Virgil E. Nelson of Slidell (he lived in the Kiln as a child) have brought us a number of interesting and helpful items. Among them are several Hancock County census books and a photograph of the Kiln High School Basketball Team of 1939.

We have previously been unable to acquire a copy of *A Boy In Rural Mississippi* by S. J. Thigpen although we have copies of his other books, *Pearl River: Highway to Gloryland*, *Work and Play In Grandpa's Day* and *Next Door to Heaven*. Mr. and Mrs. Nelson donated

DINNER MEETING

Pass Christian, Long Beach and Hancock County Historical societies will present a joint dinner meeting at the Pass Christian Yacht Club on Sunday, May 17 at 6 p.m.. Guest speaker will be well-known writer H. Grady Howell, Jr. whose talk is titled "The Civil War Comes To The Gulf Coast". Tickets, \$15.00

their copy of the former to us. We are searching for *Ninety & One Years*. If you should find one at a book sale, grab it for us.

Mary Lou Cucullu donated a 1977 Triton doubloon, complete with chain and coin-frame for our shadow box display. It seems ironic that we now prize an item that shortly ago you could literally pick up off the street.

Mary Perkins brought us two large maps of Bay Saint Louis that were used in the Perkins Real Estate Company half a century ago.

Richard and Dorothea Smith, who winter in Bay Saint Louis each year, donated a beautiful damask tablecloth and 12 matching napkins to supplement our luncheon service. Charles H. Gray

LOBRANO HOUSE HOURS

MONDAY	8 a.m.
through	to
FRIDAY	4 p.m.

THE

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Edith Back

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THE MOLLIERE HOME
401 North Beach Boulevard
Waveland Mississippi

This beautiful raised cottage prior, to Hurricane Camille in 1969, stood at North Beach Boulevard and Molliere Drive in Waveland. In the late 1900s it was the summer home of Louisiana judge, Robert Nash Ogden who called the home "Oakden". The above photograph was taken from *Strange To Say* by Mrs. Carter H. Harrison.

In 1894 the house was shown in *Along the gulf* as the summer residence of Peter Hellwege and was described as being "constructed after the plans of an old Southern Mansion of anti-bellum days" and "has the appearance of "Befo de wah".

In this century it was the home of the prominent Molliere family of Waveland.

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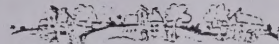
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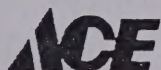
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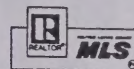
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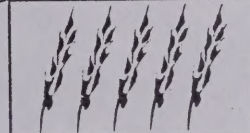
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